



Redefining heritage: the post-colonial tourist gaze and the impact of domestic tourism on Algerian identity

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'othering' them as inferior beings (Said 1978; Spivak 1988). These practices, as a result, allowed settler colonisers to solidify their displacement policies in non-European nations, resulting in land and cultural loss (Regan 2010; Veracini 2015). The subjection to genocidal unhinged practices led to challenges for the state after colonial ruling ended to repair and regain its sovereignty and, similarly, for the Indigenous people to handle the unruly identity crisis (Dizayi 2019; Majumder 2017). Between 1830 and 1962, Algeria witnessed 132 years of people's unsettlement and cultural imposition by the French empire (Bensaid and Ladjal 2012). The long-lasting colonisation consolidated France's imperialist determination to undermine the Algerian identity by alienating the Arab-Islamic cultural norms and imposing the French culture into the Algerian society (Bensaid and Ladjal 2012; Brown 2018). Such policies resulted in the loss of links to pre-colonial Algerian identity and led Algerians to adopt some features from the French lifestyle (Berque 1956).

Since the 1962 independence referendum, major decolonisation efforts began to rebuild the nation and restore the remnants. Tourism undertook reconstructive attempts at decolonising and restoring a French-free heritage and identity by both erasing references to French colonial period but also by reclaiming a narrative that emphasised a pre-colonial Algerian society. This was a shift from colonial tourism strategies that presented Algeria as a domestic destination for French and Europeans (Manai 2020). The tourism sector gradually remoulded French touristic sites to fit local communities' culture and cater to emerging domestic interest in visiting Algerian destinations (Aouinane 2014). Nevertheless, shifting from colonial narratives demanded significant strategic changes from government agencies. The changes in the Algerian tourism sector focused on an Algerian identity based on an Arab-Islamic heritage (Ennaji 2014; Ghodbani, Kansab, and Kouti 2016). Algeria's tourism literature puts a major emphasis on investigating tourism development perspectives and consumers' demands (Kherrou, Rezzaz, and Hattab 2018; Taibi 2016; Zeraib, Kouba, and Berghout 2022), post-colonial heritage management and decision-making processes to maintain sustainable tourism policies (Aouchal, Boufenara, and Verdini 2022; Coslett 2020), and cultural heritage sites protection and sustainability (Berbache and Hadjab 2020; Pirzada 2019; Rahal, Rezzaz, and Kherrou 2020). However, the concept of colonial impacts on tourists' perception, especially on their national identity, lacks investigation.

The main aim of this paper is, therefore, to investigate how the political transition from a colony to an autonomous state affected Algerian's perception of their national identity. In doing so, the paper addresses the following research questions: (1) How did the political transition from colonial to post-colonial rule shape tourism in Algeria? (2) How do Algerians perceive domestic tourism as a means of reclaiming heritage and national identity in the

studies emerged to discuss identity issues in destinations and (re)presentation of marginalised groups within a critical framework (Duval 2004; Hall and Tucker 2004; Hollinshead 2011; Little 2006; Phillips, Adams, and Salter 2015). The combination of tourism studies with the critical structure of post-colonial research offered a lens to uncover nuances and complexities of tourism embedded within the developing countries' post-colonial processes. In this sense, postcolonialism helps to accentuate 'the pervasiveness of the legacies of colonialism in tourism, and how tourism might act as a medium for offering postcolonial counter-narrative of resistance to those colonial relationships' (Tucker and Akama 2009, 504).

The postcolonial tourism field acknowledges the importance of learning the traditions of Indigenous people from the Global South, allowing for a just (re)presentation of their way of thinking, being, and viewing things (Pritchard and Morgan 2007). The book of Bunten and Graburn (2018) on Indigenous communities in Australia, Africa, and the Americas and the role of tourism in reshaping the power relations corroborate the challenges of allocating the Global South's voices within tourism predetermined Western epistemology. In their publication, 'Indigenous Tourism Movements', they ensured to involve Indigenous voices as respondents and producers of academic knowledge to justify the importance of debunking Western narratives by allowing the subaltern voices to represent themselves (Bunten and Graburn 2018). Higgins-Desbiolles and Powys Whyte's (2013) paper on hopeful tourism and the critical tourism movement also asserts the immense importance of having a 'meaningful contact with those who experience oppression that yields transformation' (p.431) for the sake of constructing a better world for all. The interdisciplinarity of tourism and postcolonialism implies the potential of debunking colonisers' narrative of identity and cultural heritage of the Global South, specifically as post-colonial identity is viewed as a complex, unfixed and unstable concept to define (Azada-Palacios 2022). Indigenous people subjugated to colonial ruling faced difficulties redefining their identity and heritage including feelings of otherness and inferiority (Chan 2006; Spivak 2015).

The colonial era was marked by the implementation of extensive sociocultural policies that influenced Algerian society causing, to some extent, damages to the nation's identity (Bensaid and Ladjal 2012; Steele 2017). The Algerian Indigenous people are composed of two major ethnicities: the Arabs and the Amazigh. Both ethnicities are coexisting within the geopolitical area of Algeria, despite the sociocultural differences prevailing between them (e.g. language and traditions). Following the end of colonial ruling, Algeria saw an opportunity to extensively reform its political, social, and cultural systems, and showcase a clear statement of their anticolonial beliefs. Hence, this study employs postcolonial theory to situate Algeria's pursuits in (re)defining, (re)presenting and narrating their identity through tourism.

Chambers' (2018) insights on postcolonial feminism and tourism, we see how Algerian women's restricted mobility reflects broader patterns of exclusion in tourism narratives across post-colonial settings.

Furthermore, McClintock (1995) explores how post-colonial nationalism often reinforces patriarchal values, restricting women's roles within emerging nation-states. In Algeria, this is evident in how post-independence national identity was reconstructed around male heroism, relegating women's contributions to the domestic sphere. Consequently, post-colonial tourism development mirrored these exclusions, with male travellers symbolically reclaiming their homeland while women faced limitations in engaging with the same experiences. This reinforces the idea that freedom and mobility remain gendered privileges rather than universal rights. The intersection of gender, colonial trauma, and national identity formation is particularly evident in the way post-colonial tourism developed in Algeria. While men were positioned as active participants in rediscovering their homeland and forging a shared post-colonial identity, women's access to these spaces was mediated through social and cultural expectations. This discrepancy underscores the need for a decolonial feminist approach to post-colonial tourism, one that critically examines how gendered power structures shape access to public spaces and opportunities for self-discovery. By engaging with Hooks' (2000) intersectional feminist framework and Chambers' (2007, 2018) contributions to postcolonial feminist tourism studies, this study provides a more nuanced understanding of the gendered post-colonial gaze, illustrating how colonial histories, nationalist discourses, and gendered inequalities continue to shape women's experiences of tourism. Recognising these complexities is crucial for developing more inclusive heritage narratives and tourism practices that acknowledge women's historical contributions, challenge restrictive gender norms, and create equitable opportunities for participation in cultural and national identity reconstruction.

3. Contextual background

Algeria's history is deeply shaped by its colonial and post-colonial political, cultural, and economic transitions, which have had significant implications for its tourism development. The French empire's interest in Algeria was driven by its strategic Mediterranean coastline and potential as a gateway to expand its influence across Africa. The conquest of Algeria in 1830 marked the beginning of 132 years of settler colonialism. France implemented policies to weaken Algerian identity, language, religion, and culture (Kiernan 2007). Indigenous communities were forcibly displaced to rural areas, creating social and geographical divides as lands were appropriated for European settlers. France's imperialist agenda replaced Arabic with French as the language of instruction, and by 1848, Algeria was

of many hotels (Monod 1932; Rolland 1889). Post-World War II efforts to revive tourism focused on developing southern Algeria's appeal as an exotic destination, although this vision was disrupted by growing anti-colonial resistance.

The War of Independence (1954–1962) marked a critical turning point in Algeria's history, ending over a century of French settler colonialism. This struggle shattered France's imperial ambitions and its vision of Algeria as a colonial tourist hub. Following independence in 1962, Algeria faced the monumental task of reconstructing its government and restoring its national identity. The initial focus was on rebuilding key sectors, such as industry, agriculture, health, and education, while tourism remained a lower priority due to limited financial resources (Aouinane 2014). However, tourism was not abandoned entirely. Early efforts included renaming the Tourism Development Centre to the National Office of Algerian Tourism (ONAT) and creating the Ministry of Tourism in 1963, aimed at renovating colonial remnants and promoting domestic and international tourism (Brown 2018).

Post-colonial tourism strategies reflected Algeria's broader nation-building agenda, with an emphasis on decolonising its identity and reclaiming its cultural heritage. Efforts were directed towards restoring precolonial Islamic and Arab heritage, which had been overshadowed by French cultural policies during colonisation. However, Algeria's reliance on hydrocarbon exports as its primary income source constrained the development of other sectors, including tourism. The fall in oil prices in 1986 further highlighted the need to diversify the economy, prompting the government to implement frameworks like the Tourism Expansion Zones. These frameworks aimed to attract investments in coastal regions and develop sustainable tourism by empowering local communities (Ghodbani, Kansab, and Kouti 2016). Domestic tourism gained prominence during this period, reflecting a preference for affordability and alignment with local cultural norms. Algerians increasingly favoured homestay rentals over hotels, allowing for a more personal and culturally immersive experience (Melubo and Doering 2022). The government's limited focus on international tourism was also influenced by concerns about perpetuating colonial dynamics. The arrival of foreign tourists risked reinforcing stereotypes of Algerians as dependent or inferior, leading to a cautious approach to opening up the sector (Bensaid and Ladjal 2012).

The civil war of the 1990s, often referred to as the 'Black Decade', further complicated Algeria's tourism development. Political instability and violence disrupted domestic and international travel, leaving the tourism sector in a state of stagnation. However, by 2001, Algeria began to stabilise, benefiting from increased oil revenues and improved security conditions. This period saw a renewed focus on tourism as part of a broader economic diversification strategy. The Horizon 2025 plan, launched in 2008, sought to position Algeria as an attractive destination while addressing challenges such as infrastructure development and international perceptions (Bouadam 2011; El Azzaoui,

The first author, an Algerian researcher, conducted the data collection, leveraging historical and geographical knowledge as well as familial and linguistic connections to gain access to participants. As a member of the Indigenous society under investigation, the researcher was uniquely positioned to explore domestic tourists' perceptions and experiences in post-colonial Algeria. This insider perspective ensured a deeper engagement with participants and their narratives, enhancing the study's authenticity and cultural sensitivity. The study employed semi-structured interviews with eleven Algerians over the age of 65. This age group was deliberately chosen to capture the perspectives of individuals who witnessed the political power shift from colonialism to independence and its effects on their livelihoods and perceptions of tourism. Participants were recruited through the researcher's community networks, including colleagues' grandparents, ensuring diverse representation from cities across Algeria. The interviews were conducted via audio calls, each lasting approximately 90 minutes, and were recorded and translated into English. A third party verified the translations to ensure their accuracy and integrity.

Given the reliance on memory for recounting experiences, the study acknowledged the potential challenges posed by cultural narratives, societal biases, or the retelling of stories over time. Despite these limitations, memory remains a critical tool for narrating trauma and identity discovery. As Craps (2013, 62) argues, 'trauma narratives are crucial for the symbolic integration of the traumatic experience, and for the restoration of a sense of self and community'. By sharing and engaging with their memories, participants contributed to reclaiming their narratives, challenging overarching colonial discourses, and asserting their identities within a post-colonial framework. To analyse the data, the study employed thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase guide: (1) becoming familiar with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. This approach allowed the researchers to identify recurring patterns across interviews and derive meaningful themes that characterised participants' experiences and perceptions. Through this process, four major themes emerged: (1) tasting freedom, (2) exploring the homeland, (3) becoming a post-colonial tourist, and (4) the gendered post-colonial gaze. These themes provided a clear structure for interpreting Algerians' cultural and national identity formation through tourism.

5. Findings and discussion

5.1. Tasting freedom

For post-colonial societies, freedom is regarded as the ability to determine their own political and economic systems, control their natural resources,

identity. The participants were reflecting on their experiences with agony, distress, and self-indulgence; they all spoke about the terror they witnessed even within their household, indicating the presence of a trauma passed through the preceding generations (Jebari 2018).

These indications of collective trauma and psychological unrest attest to redirecting their worldviews to approach life positively, unlike what Frantz Fanon proclaimed about how colonialism led the native to rebel violently in pursuits to decolonise '*Violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect*' (Fanon 1963, 94). While Fanon's statement projects a wider understanding of the native's desire for violence when being under a colonial regime and restricted lifestyle, it does not argue nor prescribe the post-colonial psychological state of the native. Indeed, colonial trauma has a lasting effect on one's psychological projection and perception of the world (Smallwood et al. 2021); the participants have reflected on their mindset and feelings after the independence referendum despite their historical trauma. To Participant B 'it was a joyful period when we first got our independence and became free. I was born during colonial presence, so I never experienced being free until 1962. As a woman with siblings and parents participating in the revolution war, I felt proud of what my brothers, sisters, and parents helped in achieving'. To Participant C just before the independence 'I was terrified of French soldiers' while remembering the Independence Day the participant claims 'it was the first day of my life that I left home feeling safe, knowing that nothing would happen to me'. To a certain extent, despite the Algerians' exposure to cleansing violence, they manifested the effects of this process as they transitioned into the next chapter of their lives. Tourism became a trivial impulse and a symbolic shift away from colonial structures, representing a form of disconnection from what once constituted their full existence as subjects of the colonial regime. As Said (1978) argued, colonial discourse does not simply fade with independence; its influence lingers in institutions, memory, and identity. The Algerians' post-independence search for self-definition and cultural re-engagement – partly expressed through domestic tourism – can thus be seen as a resistance to and rewriting of the colonial narrative that long denied their humanity and cultural legitimacy.

5.2. Exploring the homeland

In post-colonial Algeria, tourism was disregarded by the new government; simply because no one would think of visiting a newly independent country with 132 years of adverse carnage (Aouinane 2014). Neglecting the tourism sector was intentional as the focus was on the reconstruction of more crucial sectors and efficiently use available finances to build a state

The commonality of thoughts across interviews signifies a unified struggle and pursuits to defy the psychological and societal challenges in understanding the national identity's constituents.

Shu-Ning Zhang, Wen-Qi Ruan and Ting-TingYang's study on national identity construction in cultural and creative tourism (2021) demonstrates how domestic tourists' cultural memory and short-term explicit cultural learning experience help in the formation of their national identity. Tourism helped Algerians learn and construct their identity in a post-colonial setting. However, in this context, the reconstruction of national identity intersects with a sociopsychological factor of exploration to compile a new national identity alternative (Nasser 2019). With colonial educational challenges and difficulties preventing Algerians from learning about the nation's culture and identity (Sahel 2017), the alternative national identity resulted from individualistic efforts to relocate, identify, and celebrate commonalities existing within the explored homeland. This can be widely noticed in the manifestation of culture and annual events such as the Arabo-African Festival of Folklore Danse, Festival of Rai Music, and Art and Paintings Fair (Hamour 2022) that are nationally promoted to acknowledge the domestic culture and diverse identities found in its "post-colonial society.

5.3. Becoming a post-colonial tourist

In Algeria, the nation's transition demanded immediate political intervention to preserve its integrity and develop a cohesive identity, as seen in many African post-colonial governments (Hill 2006). Although tourism was not a primary focus of the government's nation-building plan (Aouinane 2014), domestic tourism became an avenue for Algerians to explore their identity and cope with the trauma of colonialism. For many, tourism was an act of self-discovery and healing, as Participant A reflected: 'I never knew what tourism is until I started partaking in a few trips with my neighbourhood friends ... tourism was my therapy to forget what my people went through for decades'. The act of domestic travel in this context represents more than leisure; it encapsulates a process of identity formation. Algerians engaged in domestic tourism as a means of connecting with their cultural roots, understanding shared histories, and rediscovering their national identity. The post-colonial tourist gaze, a concept rooted in Urry's (1992) idea of the tourist gaze, plays a significant role in this process. Unlike the colonial tourist gaze, which often sought to exoticise and other the Indigenous population, the post-colonial gaze enabled Algerians to see themselves reflected in their heritage and recognise commonalities among their communities. Participant C noted, 'Their culture is similar to my hometown's', while Participant G observed, 'I learnt how much we share in common with people living in the places I visited, not only customs but even how we think and the fear we endure'.

both cultural norms and historical trauma. For instance, Participant H noted, 'It was scary to go to new places even if I always travelled with family, but I always saw others as strangers and unpredictable, unlike those who live in my neighbourhood or my family'. Similarly, Participant J remarked, 'I was afraid and always watching over my shoulder, I had trust issues when it comes to those that I never met before, and that was holding me back when visiting new places; I preferred being in a familiar place with familiar faces'. These statements reflect a broader pattern in which societal expectations and patriarchal norms restricted women's ability to engage with tourism as freely as their male counterparts (Chambers 2007; Hooks 2000).

Colonial trauma, coupled with gender discrimination, significantly influenced women's post-colonial tourism experiences. While men were more likely to participate in exploration and community engagement through tourism, women faced barriers tied to societal perceptions of safety, propriety, and mobility (Enloe et al. 2018). Unlike their male counterparts, women's fear of unfamiliar environments and cultural expectations limited their engagement with the collective identity formation facilitated by tourism. The gendered post-colonial gaze is also evident in the representation of women at heritage sites and in tourism narratives. Many heritage sites glorify male revolutionaries while neglecting the roles of women, thus perpetuating a skewed understanding of Algeria's history. Participant narratives, coupled with historical analysis, underscore this omission, as women veterans rarely appear in official commemorations of the independence struggle. Addressing these gaps in representation requires a more inclusive approach to heritage management that recognises women's significant contributions to Algeria's cultural and historical legacy (Boehmer 2005a, 2005b; Chambers 2018).

Moreover, the intersection of gender with other factors such as socioeconomic status and geography highlights further disparities. Rural women, for example, face additional barriers to participating in tourism due to limited access to resources and infrastructure. Urban women, on the other hand, may encounter cultural restrictions that prioritise male participation in tourism and public life. These intersecting barriers demonstrate the need for heritage tourism initiatives that empower women and actively challenge systemic inequalities (Fougère and Moulettes 2012, Hooks, 2000). Hooks (2000) emphasises that feminism must centre the experiences of women living at the margins – those affected by class, race, geography, and colonial histories – in order to develop genuinely transformative and inclusive practices. Her work highlights how addressing gender inequality requires a critical examination of the structural forces that shape women's access to public spaces and participation in social life. The gendered post-colonial gaze reveals the complex interplay between historical trauma, cultural norms, and societal expectations that shape women's experiences in tourism. By

identity reconstruction in post-colonial settings. It builds upon and extends the work of scholars such as Hall and Tucker (2014) and Higgins-Desbiolles (2022), who explore tourism's role in reclaiming cultural heritage and reinforcing national identity in societies emerging from colonial rule. Unlike earlier research – such as Garrod and Fyall (2000) – which primarily emphasised the economic and developmental dimensions of heritage tourism, this study addresses a key gap by focusing on its psychosocial aspects, particularly in relation to identity formation and heritage recovery in post-colonial contexts like Algeria. Through examining the transition from colonial to post-colonial tourism, the study demonstrates how domestic tourism enables the restoration of cultural and historical ties disrupted by colonialism. It draws attention to the dynamic relationship between heritage and identity among Indigenous Algerians, for whom tourism serves both as a form of self-exploration and a means of reconnecting with precolonial cultural roots.

Central to this discussion is the development of the concept of the post-colonial tourist gaze, which this study positions as a significant contribution to heritage and tourism literature. The post-colonial tourist gaze is framed as a lens through which individuals actively reinterpret and reimagine heritage sites, landscapes, and cultural practices from a post-colonial perspective, allowing them to challenge and transcend colonial narratives embedded within the tourism landscape. In the Algerian context, the post-colonial tourist gaze is crucial in understanding how Indigenous communities navigate their heritage and identity. Through domestic tourism, Algerians reframe sites that were once marketed to colonial audiences and imbue them with local cultural significance, rejecting colonial interpretations and fostering a renewed sense of ownership. This gaze enables tourists to critically engage with their cultural heritage, not as passive consumers, but as active participants in the reconstruction of identity and the reclamation of historical narratives evolving the ideas presented by Stone and Nyaupane (2019) and Tucker and Akama (2009). It also allows for the negotiation of contemporary national identity by integrating elements of precolonial, colonial, and post-colonial experiences into a cohesive understanding of Algerian heritage.

By focusing on the Algerian case, this study demonstrates how the post-colonial tourist gaze operates as a transformative tool for individuals and communities to reconnect with their roots, reassert agency over their cultural narratives, and heal from the trauma of colonisation. In providing a deeper understanding of the intersection between heritage tourism and identity reconstruction, we offered valuable insights into the potential of tourism to serve as a platform for societal healing and cultural regeneration. By incorporating this perspective, the study not only addresses a critical gap in heritage tourism literature but also enriches the broader discussions on the cultural and political implications of tourism in post-colonial settings.

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